

Message Text

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ACTION EA-13

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ADP-00 NSC-10 NSCE-00 INR-10 L-02 PM-03

EUR-10 DODE-00 CIAE-00 RSC-01 RSR-01 NSAE-00 SSO-00

CCO-00 INRE-00 DPW-01 AID-10 IO-03 /079 W
----- 017179

O R 091130 Z APR 73

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9871

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMCONSUL BIEN HOA

AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

AMCONSUL CAN THO

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMCONSUL DANANG

USDEL JEC PARIS

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMCONSUL NHA TRANG

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY SEOUL

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

CINCPAC

CDRUSSAG NKP RTAFB

COMUSMACTHAI BANGKOK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 SAIGON 5967

LIMDIS

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

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E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT PINS MILI VS

SUBJECT: VIETNAM CEASEFIRE OVERVIEW- APRIL 9, 1973

1. SUMMARY: THE TENTH CEASEFIRE WEEK WAS A DISTRESSING ONE WITH RISING LEVELS OF VIOLENCE AND CONTINUING DETERIORATION IN THE ICCS. TONG LE CHAN CONTINUED UNDER PRESSURE AND WAS BEING VIEWED BY MANY AS A TEST CASE BOTH IN THE ICCS AND THE TPJMC. ADDITIONALLY, IT IS BEING RAISED BY THE GVN WITH THE 12 SIGNATORIES TO THE " FINAL ACT." THE SHOOTING DOWN OF AN ICCS HELICOPTER NEAR LAO BAO WITH THE DEATHS OF NINE PASSENGERS AND CREW ON SATURDAY APRIL 7 MARKED THE END OF A BAD WEEK. THE ONLY LIMITED RELIEF IN THE WEEKS EVENTS WAS THE FACT THAT THE PARTIES CONTINUED TO SPEAK (AND, ONE HOPES, TO LISTEN) TO ONE ANOTHER WITHIN THE TPJMC FRAMEWORK AND AT PARIS. THUS, IT REMAINS A POSSIBLE INTERPRETATION OF VC/ NVA PRESSURES THAT THEY ARE ALL PART OF A TOUGH POLITICAL/ MILITARY BARGAINING PROCESS. END SUMMARY.

2. IN TERMS OF MILITARY ACTIVITY THE CEASEFIRE WORSENERD PERCEPTIBLY THIS WEEK. MR-1 REMAINED RELATIVELY QUIET BUT WITH A CONTINUING BUILD- UP OF COMMUNIST CAPABILITIES NORTH OF THE HAI VAN PASS. THOUGH RELATIVELY QUIET IN VO-2, THE INCIDENTS HAVE SHIFTED FROM ATTACKS BY FIRE TO A NUMBER OF GROUND ATTACKS OF A TENACITY NOT SEEN SINCE THE CEASEFIRE HIGH POINT. IN MR-3, HEAVY, THOUGH SLIGHTLY REDUCED, PRESSURE CONTINUES ON THE RANGER CAMP AT TONG LE CHAN. ADDITIONALLY, THE GVN BEGAN TO TAKE MORE SERIOUSLY THE POSSIBILITY OF MAJOR PRESSURE DEVELOPING AGAINST PHUOC LONG PROVINCE, SPECULATING THAT THE VC/ NVA MAY BE TRYING TO SECURE POSSESSION OF A PROVINCE SIZED PIECE OF TERRITORY INVOLVING NORTHERN TAY NINH PROVINCE, THE LOC NINH AREA IN NORTHERN BINH LONG PROVINCE AND PART OF PHUOC LONG PROVINCE. MR-4 SAW SOME OF THE BLOODIEST FIGHTING SINCE THE CEASEFIRE THIS WEEK WITH HEAVY ACTION IN CHUONG THIEN, DINH TUONG AND, ESPECIALLY IN KIEN PHONG PROVINCE AS THE BATTLE FOR THE HONG NGU ENTRY POINT CONTINUED.

3. THE VIOLENCE IN THE HONG NGU AREA LED TO A DECISION FOR THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE ICCS CANDEL AND INDODEL. THE COMMUNIST DELEGATIONS NEVER DEPLOYED TO HONG NGU. THE HEAVY VIOLENCE DIRECTED AT HONG NGU BOTH THROUGH GROUND PROBES AND THROUGH CONFIDENTIAL

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SHELLINGS WHILE ICCS DELEGATES WERE ACTUALLY RESIDENT THERE

SEEMS SYMPTOMATIC, IN ITS WORST FORM, OF THE DISREGARD OF THE VC/ NVA FOR CANDEL/ INDODEL OPINION.

4. BOTH IN THE ICCS PLENARY AND THE REGIONS A CLEAR NEW PATTERN OF CANADIAN CONDUCT WAS DEVELOPING, PURSUING INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATIONS VIGOROUSLY, CHALLENGING COMMUNIST PROCRASTINATION AND OBSTRUCTIONISM AGGRESSIVELY AND APPARENTLY TRYING TO BUILD A RECORD TO MARK THE COMMUNIST DELEGATIONS AS AT FAULT SHOULD THE ICCS FAIL IN ITS MISSION. THE OBSTRUCTIONISM OF THE HUNGDEL AND POLDEL REMAINED UNALTERED IN ANY IMPORTANT WAY THIS WEEK. WHILE A SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF REPORTS WERE FORWARDED BY THE ICCS PLENARY TO THE TWO PARTY JOINT MILITARY COMMISSION (TPJMC), THEY CONTINUED TO BE INNOCUOUS, INCONCLUSIVE OR SPLIT DECISIONS. WHILE THEIR BEHAVIOR REMAINED UNCHANGED, THE COMMUNIST DELEGATIONS INDICATED IN CONVERSATIONS WITH AMERICANS THEIR AWARENESS OF US OFFICIAL UNHAPPINESS WITH THEIR PERFORMANCE AND THEY ATTEMPTED TO DEFEND THEIR ACTIONS.

5. THE SINGLE MOST DISTRESSING EVENT OF THE WEEK WAS THE SHOOTING DOWN OF AN AIR AMERICA ICCS HELICOPTER ON SATURDAY, APRIL 7, NEAR LAO BAO IN PRG CONTROLLED TERRITORY WHILE ON A RECCE TO THE LAO BAO ICCS SITE. NINE PERSONS WERE LOST INCLUDING 3 CREW MEMBERS (2 US), 2 PRG AND 4 ICCS (1 CANADIAN, 2 INDONESIAN AND 2 HUNGARIANS). THE PREVAILING REACTION IS ONE OF SHOCK AND IT IS STILL TOO EARLY TO ASSESS THE POLITICAL REMIFICATIONS OF THE INCIDENT OR THE EFFECT IT MAY HAVE ON THE OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES FOLLOWED IN THE FUTURE BY THE ICCS. THE HAZARDS WERE UNDERLINED, HOWEVER, ON MONDAY, APRIL 9, WHEN A VNAF HELICOPTER WHICH WAS ACCOMPANYING AN ICCS HELICOPTER NORTH OF VI THANH IN MR-4 TOOK AUTOMATIC WEAPONS FIRE, THOUGH WITHOUT LOSS OF LIFE.

6. FINALLY, DESPITE A MAJOR EFFORT, THE CANDEL WAS UNABLE TO ACHIEVE ANY PROGRESS IN THE ICCS PLENARY ON THE TONG LE CHAN ISSUE AND THAT RANGER CAMP ON THE TAY NINH/ BINH LONG BORDER CONTINUED UNDER HEAVY BUT SLIGHTLY MODERATING PRESSURE. IN FRUSTRATION OVER ICCS FAILURE TO DEAL WITH THE QUESTION THE GVN TURNED TO THE DIPLOMATIC FRONT. THE GVN HAS ADDRESSED A LETTER TO THE 12 SIGNATORIES OF THE " FINAL ACT", PROTESTING PRG VIOLATIONS AT TONG LE CHAN, APPEALING TO THEM TO CONTRIBUTE TO A PROPER OBSERVATION OF THE CEASEFIRE AND, CONFIDENTIAL

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IF PRG VIOLATIONS CONTINUE, RESERVING TO THEMSELVES THE RIGHT OF

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ACTION EA-13

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ADP-00 NSC-10 NSCE-00 INR-10 L-02 PM-03

EUR-10 DODE-00 CIAE-00 RSC-01 RSR-01 NSAE-00 SSO-00

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O R 091130 Z APR 73
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9872
NFO RUMTBK/ AMEMBASSY BANGKOK 8746
AMCONSUL BIEN HOA
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMCONSUL CAN THO
AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
AMCONSUL DANANG
USDEL JEC PARIS
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
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AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
AMEMBASSY WARSAW
AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON
CINCPAC
CDRUSSAG NKP RTAFB
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 SAIGON 5967
L I M D I S
SELF DEFENSE.

7. NOT ONLY WAS TONG LE CHAN A CENTRAL ISSUE IN THE ICCS BUT IN THE
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TPJMC, AS WELL. BOTH THE TPJMC PLENARY AND ITS SUB- COMMITTEES MET BUT NO PROGRESS WAS MADE AND THE GVN MADE IT CLEAR THAT NO PROGRESS COULD BE MADE UNTIL THE TONG LE CHAN QUESTION WAS SETTLED. THERE IS SPECULATION THAT THE VC/ NVA CONSIDER IT IMPORTANT TO AT LEAST FORCE THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE TONG LE CHAN GARRISON IN ORDER TO RELIEVE PRESSURE ON VC/ NVA SUPPLY LINES FROM CAMBODIA TO THE AN LOC AREA. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE PRG DEL IN THE TPJMC HAS BEEN USING THE TONG LE CHAN ISSUE TO ATTEMPT TO FORCE GVN AGREEMENT TO A MEETING OF LOCAL GVN/ PRG COMMANDERS. THE DEFINITION OF " LOCAL COMMANDERS", HOWEVER, IS THE STICKING POINT WITH CONSIDERABLE POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE.

8. DESPITE THE LACK OF PROGRESS, THE CONTINUED MEETINGS OF THE VARIOUS BODIES OF THE TPJMC AND INDICATIONS THAT THE TWO PARTIES ARE INTERESTED IN DEALING WITH VARIOUS ISSUES WITHIN THE TPJMC FORUM WAS THE ONE SLIGHTLY HEARTENING NOTE OF THE WEEK. SOME MEMBERS OF THE GVN TPJMC DELEGATION SEE THE TPJMC AS A FORUM WITHIN WHICH SOME PROBLEMS CAN BE SOLVED AND PROGRESS MADE IN MOVING AWAY FROM THE MILITARY STRUGGLE. THESE GVN OFFICIALS BELIEVE (CONTRARY TO THE VIEWS OF GVN CHIEF DEL, LTG THUAN) THAT PRG CHIEF DEL LTG TRA REALLY WISHES TO MOVE IN THIS DIRECTION. A FAILURE OF THE TPJMC TO DEAL WITH THE TONG LE CHAN QUESTION, ESPECIALLY IF MARKET BY THE FALL OF THE CAMP, WOULD BE A SEVERE SETBACK TO THIS VIEWPOINT WITHIN THE GVN. DESPITE THE RISING LEVEL OF VIOLENCE, GENERALLY, THE FAILURE OF THE VC/ NVA SO FAR TO MOUNT A SERIOUS EFFORT TO SEIZE AND HOLD ANY KEY PIECES OF REAL ESTATE LEAVES OPEN THE POSSIBILITY THAT THEY DO NOT YET WISH TO ABANDON AN EXPLORATION OF THE POSSIBLE POLITICAL BENEFITS OF A CEASEFIRE BUT ARE USING THEIR MILITARY FORCE JUST SHORT OF COMPLETE CONFRONTATION IN SUPPORT OF THEIR BARGAINING POSITION.

9. THE TWO PARTIES POSITIONS REMAINED UNCHANGED IN THE BILATERAL TALKS IN PARIS AND, WITH AGREEMENT ON AN AGENDA STILL LACKING, NO PROGRESS WAS MADE. THE GVN DID OFFER TO HOLD SECRET TALKS BUT THE PRG REFUSED. THERE WAS ALSO NO PROGRESS MADE THIS WEEK ON THE QUESTION OF CIVILIAN DETAINEES, THOUGH THE PRG WAS PRESSING AN INTENSIFIED PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN ON THE SUBJECT.

10. ARVN COMMANDERS WERE REMAINING ALERT BUT GENERALLY RESTRAINED IN DEFENDING THEIR POSITIONS WHILE THE GVN PRESSED FOR SOLUTIONS ON THE DIPLOMATIC/ POLITICAL FRONT UNTIL THE OTHER SIDES INTENTIONS BECAME CLEARER.

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*** Current Classification *** CONFIDENTIAL

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